

**REPRESENTATIVE  
AL O'BRIEN**  
1<sup>ST</sup> DISTRICT

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**Committees:**

- Criminal Justice and Corrections (Chair)
- Capital Budget

Please join Sen. Rosemary McAuliffe, Rep. Mark Ericks and myself at one of the three Town Hall meetings we will be holding on March 19:

MLT Library  
10:00 to 11:30 AM  
23300 58th Avenue West  
Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043

Northshore Adult Day Center  
for 1:00 to 2:30 PM  
9929 NE 180th  
Bothell, WA 98011

Cathcart Elementary School Library  
from 3:30 to 5:00 PM  
8201 188th Ave. SE, Snohomish, WA

**Sign up for my weekly e-memo!**  
Send me an e-mail ([obrien.al@leg.wa.gov](mailto:obrien.al@leg.wa.gov)) so I can add you to my list. You'll receive legislative news from my computer to yours every week. It saves money on postage and keeps you informed about everything that's happening under the dome. You can unsubscribe at any time and your e-mail address will not be shared with anyone else.

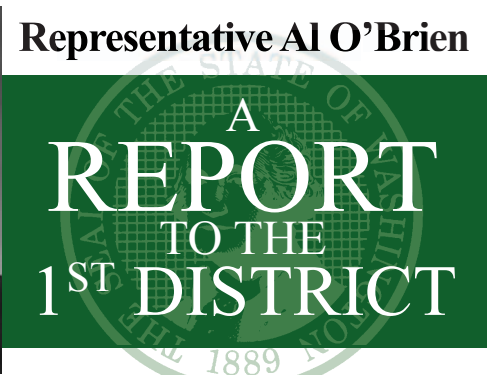

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Town Hall meetings March 19-see inside for details

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WINTER 2005



**Representative Al O'Brien**

**A  
REPORT  
TO THE  
1<sup>ST</sup> DISTRICT**

Dear neighbor,

With the new year comes a new legislative session and by the time you receive this update it will be well underway.

As you know, renovations to the historic legislative building concluded a few months ago and both House and Senate are now carrying out the business of the people of Washington under the dome. It is truly magnificent; I encourage you to see it for yourself the next time you're in Olympia.

One of our main tasks –and probably the hardest, is to write a two-year budget. What makes it difficult is that we'll struggle to preserve critical state programs while facing a \$2 billion budget deficit. I am confident, however, that House democrats will work effectively with members across the aisle to ensure that the resulting budget reflects our core values:

- ✧ intelligent investments in education;
- ✧ accessible and affordable health care; and
- ✧ family-wage jobs with benefits.

The goal is to ensure that Washington remains a great place to live, work and raise families, while delivering solutions for a large-scale economy.


Other hot button issues this session are:

- ✧ Education: alternative assessments
- ✧ Renewable energy: endless possibilities
- ✧ B&O tax: exemptions for new businesses
- ✧ Election reform: restoring trust

As you see, we've got our work cut out. We must do all we can to ensure that the legislation we adopt promotes social and environmental justice, as well as economic prosperity.

I am honored to represent you in Olympia; I always welcome your comments and look forward to our district-wide dialogue on matters that are important to you.

Sincerely,



Al O'Brien  
State Representative ✧ 1st Legislative District



## The Budget: a balancing act

The reality is that the state is facing a budget shortfall of over \$2 billion. There is just not enough revenue coming into the state treasury. A quick fix would be to cut many current services. Programs such as parks and health care for our low-income families and children could be wiped off the map. But cutting vital programs and services would eventually result in more serious problems.

House democrats are committed to keeping our promise to public employees, teachers and other employees that every resident in Washington depends on. We must continue providing services for vulnerable seniors and children because they are desperately needed. From across the state legislators have gathered in Olympia and everyone is frantically looking for workable solutions.

The \$2 billion gap is real and we are required by the state constitution to balance the budget. To do so successfully, I think a holistic approach is better than a simplistic either/or quick fix.

I will work on encouraging legislators on both sides of the aisle to consider an objective scope that looks at the whole budget and the needs of the state in a fair, even-handed manner.

## Education: Alternative Assessments

Why are so many of our kids performing poorly in school or dropping out completely? I believe part of the problem can be solved if we offer our students alternative assessments to demonstrate they know their material. Keep in mind that only three years from now students will have to pass the WASL in major subject areas, such as math, reading, and writing.

Different people have different skills, as well as different ways of demonstrating knowledge. This session I will support legislation to help students prepare and reach the achievement goals that we've set, taking their differences into account. The new measures will represent significant improvements especially among students who struggle on testing day, or are not native English speakers. These children are the future of Washington, we need to make sure they have every opportunity to pass the test and graduate.



## Election Reform: restoring trust

We are the greatest democracy on the planet, and what's more basic to our country's brand of democracy than counting everyone's vote – and making sure that everyone's vote counts?

The incredibly close election for governor has shaken confidence in our election system, and we must take action to restore our voters' trust.

### THE HISTORY OF CONTESTED ELECTIONS

In 1941 legislators challenged the election of our governor. A motion was made to reject the results of the race and form a joint committee to investigate the election. Following a spirited debate, the motion was turned down by a majority of legislators in the House and Senate, and the certified election was signed.

On the second day of the current legislative session, a motion was made to delay the acceptance of the certified election for Governor. There was no call for an official inquiry or a committee to investigate the election.

The right place for any challenge is in our courts. I voted against any delay in accepting the certified results because the Constitution requires that we certify them and our state laws lay out the process for contesting an election. I believe that voting for the delay would have violated the oath of office I had signed just the day before.

### A CLEAR NEED FOR REFORMS

Clearly, we need to adopt comprehensive election reform in our state that will prevent this sort of problem from occurring again.

### MAJOR REFORMS

This session I'm introducing legislation that will bring trustworthiness back to our election system. These are some of the reforms included in my bill (HB 1604):

- Change the primary to June – If the primary is moved earlier in the year, it would give county auditors more time to send out absentee ballots, especially to our military voters overseas.
- A single, universal form of voting statewide – Today there are different voting machines and systems across Washington. There's less room for mistakes if every county uses the same form of voting.
- Make provisional ballots a different color – This would simplify the identification process of provisional ballots, and greatly reduce the margin of error.
- Make Election Day absentee ballot due date – This reform eliminates the wait and delay from late absentee ballots trickling into auditor offices by establishing that these ballots must be received no later than 8:00 PM on the date of the election.

## Renewable energy: endless possibilities

It's time we take a serious look at the renewable energy portfolio. This session it simply makes sense to steer our interest in this direction. Increasing energy efficiency programs and the amount of new renewable energy within utilities will provide numerous benefits to our state. It will stimulate economic development, help stabilize electricity rates, provide a cleaner environment and create new jobs.

As demand for renewable energy and energy efficiency increases, more and more manufacturing companies will be locating plants in our region and they will employ Washington workers.



## B&O Tax: exemptions for new businesses

Washington is a great place to do business, but setting up shop is hard no matter where you are. That's why I believe new businesses should get some help.

This session I'm introducing legislation (HB 1869) to grant B&O tax preferences to new businesses. It would allow new businesses to take a \$100,000 deduction per year during their first three years of operation.

The savings would make it easier for the businesses to get settled and hire the workers they need to grow and succeed.



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